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Walking with Helen

Carter Johnson
Virginia Military Institute

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URCA: The NCHC Journal of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity
2018 Edition

Walking with Helen

by Carter Johnson
Virginia Military Institute

Walk with me, Helen.
Come walk in the Garden of the Gods.
Sit with me under the red rocks
and look - the snowy peaks reach at the sky.
This is a worthy spot to talk,
Here among the green and grand.

Helen, my love,

Your face launched a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium.
Your name will not die,
And your story will not cease.
But was it worth it?

When you saw the mighty Hector fall,
And heard his blood cry out from the red dust,
When you surveyed the burning Troy,
And saw the belly of the beast
Break open with Greek intestines,
Was it worth it?

Did beauty save your soul?
Did it bring you joy?
Surely you were perennially adored,
But were you ever loved?

Would you do it again?
You must have known.
Can one hold a flame to their bosom
And not be burnt?

Perhaps your chest was worth the price.
To escape the fire which burnt your Aphroditen form.
Would you suffer afar
Or suffer at home?

Tell me, Helen.
What can you say?
Can you guide our pursuit of beauty and life?
Can the ashes of Troy leave an enduring light?

I'm sorry to press my dear;

I merely want to know:
Was it worth it?

Porcelain

I am a piece of painted porcelain,
Cast down among a herd of snorting bulls;
Yet the posed and silent, resting glass,
Masters all the fits of raging mules.
They buck and rage and always want to kick;
They flare their bulging, scorching, tyrant's chest.
With one quick snap, they stomp the quiet dish,
And snort with nostrils filled with scalding zest.
Shattered and low upon the lonesome ground,
A mosaic all of trampled crumbs.
In the breathlessness of dry dust resounds
Beauty's greater unrelenting sum.
On the casting eye – beauty must look frail;
Yet the largest bull – heels at beauty's tail.